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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 70/NO. 22 JUNE 5, 2006

INSIDE

Guantánamo prisoners protest, face attack by U.S. jailers

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Unionize the mines!

Build the UMWA! No miner has to die!

"There is only one effective tool coal miners can use to enforce safety: a local of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in every single mine," said the lead editorial in the February 6 *Militant*, responding to the Sago Mine disaster in January and the subsequent spate of deaths of U.S. miners on the job. "That's why the *Militant* is calling upon workers, farmers, and others to support union-organizing efforts by coal miners across the United States and Canada." And, it should be added, the world over.

EDITORIAL

Organizing the mines has become even more urgent now after the deaths of another six coal miners in Kentucky, and another one in West Virginia—casualties of the bosses' profit drive. The fate of 57 miners in northern China, trapped by underground flooding, underscores the importance of this question worldwide.

As one of the workers put it at the Kentucky Darby Mine No. 1, where

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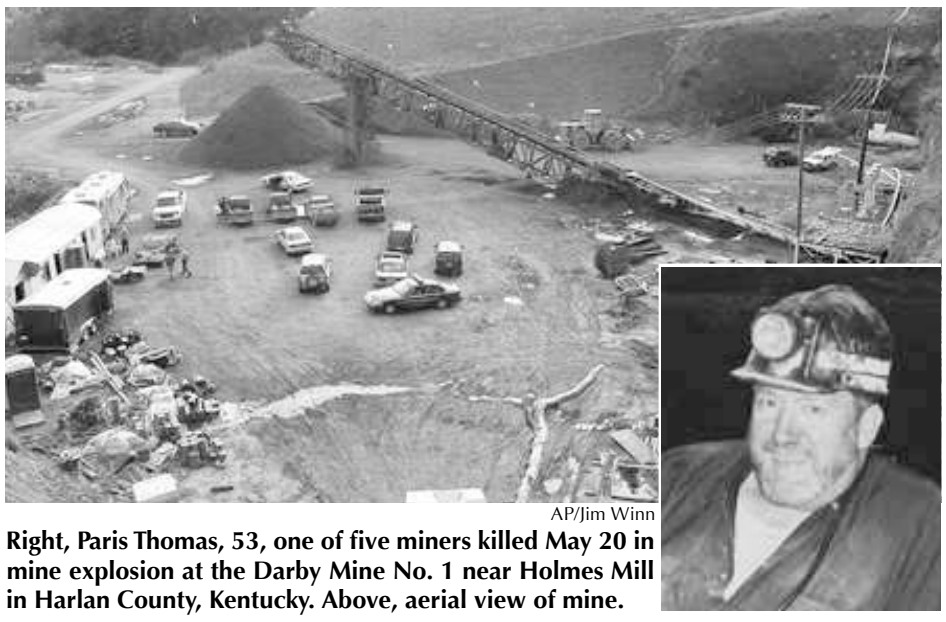

AP/Jim Winn

Right, Paris Thomas, 53, one of five miners killed May 20 in mine explosion at the Darby Mine No. 1 near Holmes Mill in Harlan County, Kentucky. Above, aerial view of mine.

Bosses' profit greed kills six Kentucky miners

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

HOLMES MILL, Kentucky, May 24—"My brother-in-law Paris and the other miners would have survived if they'd had enough oxygen in their self-rescuers," said Russell Taylor, a coal miner at the Randy Dee LLC mine in Cawood, Kentucky.

Taylor, who has worked underground for 15 years, spoke to the *Militant* yesterday outside a funeral home in Evarts, a town in Harlan County, Kentucky. Gov. Ernest Fletcher was there that afternoon to meet with the families of five miners who died underground after an early-morning explosion on May 20 shook the Darby Mine No. 1 here, owned by Kentucky Darby LLC.

Paris Thomas Jr., 53, a coal miner for 31 years, was one of those killed. The others were

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'We won battle at Co-Op mine due to strength of our fight and solidarity'

BY NORTON SANDLER

SAN FRANCISCO—"We won the battle at the Co-Op mine because of the strength of our fight and the solidarity we received from many unions across this country and internationally, and from working people like those of you here today," said coal miner Bill Estrada.

A participant in the two-and-half-year union-organizing struggle at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, Estrada was addressing a well-attended Militant Labor Forum here May 21.

"In Price, Utah, on June 4, we are going to celebrate the accomplishments of this struggle and our recent victory. We will celebrate how the forces who joined

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N.Y. march calls for legalization of immigrants

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

NEW YORK—A lively demonstration of several hundred people marched down Madison Avenue here May 20 demanding legislation to regularize the legal status of undocumented immigrants.

Numerous immigrant rights organizations and other groups joined the march. These included the Latin American Integration Center, UNITE HERE Local 23-25, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32BJ, Coney Island Avenue Project (based among immigrants of South Asian origin), Haitian-Americans United for Progress, and Families for Freedom.

"We won't be fooled by a bill that looks like legalization but unfairly disqualifies millions of immigrants, separates families, strips immigrants of due process and civil rights, and leaves workers vul-

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Senate backs use of Nat'l Guard on Mexico border

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly May 22 to support President George Bush's plan, announced a week earlier, to deploy up to 6,000 National Guard troops to the border with Mexico to assist in policing operations. The vote was 83-10 on an amendment to a Senate immigration "reform" bill. Administration officials told the media that Bush already has the authority to deploy the Guard units to the border.

Pentagon officials have also backed the president's plan, dismissing claims by administration critics that the operation will overstretch the U.S. military. "This will not only not adversely affect America's ability to conduct the war on terror or respond to other domestic emergencies," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told Congress May 17. "It will actually provide useful, real-life training for the members of the National Guard."

The troops are to be rotated in two- or three-week stints. Over the course of the first year this will involve about 100,000 of the Guard's 400,000 troops, Paul McHale, assistant secre-

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Demonstrators in D.C., Los Angeles: U.S. hands off Cuba and Venezuela!

BY PAUL PEDERSON

WASHINGTON—In a spirited march winding from Malcolm X Park through this city to a rally across from the White House, some 500 people gathered here May 20 to demand an end to the U.S. government's threats and hostile moves against Cuba and Venezuela.

Marchers protested U.S. efforts to undermine and topple the government of Venezuela headed by President Hugo Chávez. They called for an end to Washington's decades-long embargo and travel ban against Cuba, and for normalization of relations with that Caribbean nation.

The protesters demanded an end to Washington's illegal occupation of Guantánamo and closure of its notorious prison camp there. They rallied for the release of five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and jailed in U.S. prisons, and for the extradition to Venezuela of Luis Posada Carriles, a right-wing Cuban bomber harbored

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Special Militant Labor Forums

Celebrate Utah miners' victory in dropping of Co-Op Mine lawsuit!

Friday, May 26

New York
7 p.m. Dinner
8 p.m. Program
Speakers: Alyson Kennedy, former Co-Op miner and participant in union organizing struggle; and others

Pittsburgh
6:30 p.m. Dinner
7:30 p.m. Program
Speakers: Alyson Kennedy and others

Twin Cities
6:30 p.m. Dinner
7:30 p.m. Program
Speakers: Paul Mailhot and others

Saturday, May 27

Houston
6 p.m. Dinner
7:30 p.m. Program
Speakers: Bill Estrada and others

For local contact information, see directory on page 8

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Appeal to our readers

Dear Reader,

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This is a needed response to the new spike in deaths of coal miners on the

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Report: U.S. government undercounts job injuries 3

China: 57 miners trapped in underground flood 9

Trapped underground for 14 days, Australia gold miners are rescued

BY RON POULSEN AND ALASDAIR MACDONALD

SYDNEY, Australia—Two miners walked free May 9 after being entombed almost a kilometer (.62 mile) underground for two weeks. Brant Webb and Todd Russell were trapped, and their workmate, Larry Knight, was killed when rock fell in the area where they were working in the Beaconsfield Gold Mine in northern Tasmania April 25. Fellow miners from across the island and the mainland volunteered in a risky marathon tunneling effort to free them.

While the company claimed the fatal cave-in was caused by a "seismic event," the Australian Workers Union (AWU), which represents hard rock miners, disagreed. "The union is concerned about the use of the term seismic event to describe what happened," Bill Shorten, national secretary of the union, told the May 16 *Bulletin* magazine. "This is not an event caused by the hand of God interfering with the crust of the earth. It is man-made."

Webb, 37, and Russell, 35, were in an open work-cage 925 meters deep (3,034 feet), reinforcing shaft walls when the roof of their tunnel—and the roof of the one above it—collapsed. They were saved by their own welded reinforcements to the steel cage as a large slab of rock landed on top. Knight, 44, operating the machine at the rear, was killed instantly.

Fourteen miners working deeper escaped using a safety chamber. With three men missing, the rescue operation began.

Five days later the trapped men's voices were heard under the rubble. Blasting was stopped. Through gaps in the rocks miners squeezed initial supplies to them.

The Beaconsfield Gold Mine opened in 1878 and closed in 1914 as unprofitable. However, new technologies and surging gold prices led to reopening the mine in 1999. The company employs 190 workers.

Deep rock mining is highly dangerous. Explosives used to tunnel may cause "seismic events." Gold-bearing quartz can explode under stress. Last July, Beaconsfield residents complained mine blasting set off tremors, cracking walls.

Six months ago, a major rock fall forced closure of the level above the new disaster. With gold prices at a 25-year high, Beaconsfield Gold boasts of extracting "close to 100 percent" of the gold-filled ore by removing the pillars of unmined levels of rock that maintain the mine's structure. These pillars are then replaced in some cases by cemented backfill, a practice criticized as unsafe by the AWU and miners.

The Tasmanian government, pressured by the AWU and a May 11 meeting of 68 Beaconsfield miners, is to convene a full inquiry into the disaster and mine safety. Currently, compliance with safety measures is by company "self-regulation," not government enforcement. There have been 175 mining deaths nationwide since 1994.

Reuters/Ian Wadie

Miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb (obscured) emerge from Beaconsfield Gold Mine in Tasmania, Australia, on May 9 after being trapped for 14 days.

Australia, New Zealand rulers beef up force in Solomons

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The New Zealand and Australian governments have nearly doubled their military and police presence in the Solomon Islands in the wake of protests in April against the new parliament's election of Snyder Rini as prime minister. Nearly 400 police and 525 troops are now deployed on the island nation of 550,000 people.

The intervention forces are there as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), first deployed in 2003.

The imperialist intervention force also includes dozens of Australian and New Zealand civilian officials "embedded" in government departments to run key aspects of the country, including its financial and legal system. Its appointees include the police commissioner, solicitor-general, and accountant-general.

In the past three years, RAMSI cops have arrested more than 4,000 people. They are currently holding the newly appointed minister of police on charges of "inciting a riot" in the April events.

The April protests included reactionary attacks in Honiara, the capital, that destroyed most of Chinatown and forced several hundred Solomon Islanders of Chinese descent to flee. This explosion of anti-Chinese resentment was fueled by allegations that the government of Taiwan provided millions of dollars in bribes to secure Rini's election and that they had similarly funded the previous government, in which Rini was deputy prime minister, in return for diplomatic recognition.

Following the protests, Snyder Rini resigned. Manasseh Sogavare, previously installed as prime minister when rightist gangs from the island of Malaita staged a coup in 2000, has now been elected in his place.

Reuters/Tim Wimborne

Australian cop in Honiara, capital of Solomon Islands in the Pacific, on April 25.

THE MILITANT

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"The mainstream press fails to cover what's important, fails to cover events from the people's perspective, and most important of all, fails to question seriously the status quo in America and elsewhere. The 'Militant,' in brilliant contrast, is a truly people's press. It is the most honest newspaper I've ever read."

—Eddie Beck
Newark, New Jersey

Eddie "Santi" Beck is a student at Rutgers University in Newark.

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Protesters tell Washington: 'Hands off Cuba, Venezuela'

Continued from front page
by the U.S. government.

Ike Nahem of Cuba Solidarity New York condemned the current U.S. military maneuvers in the Caribbean as a threat against Cuba and Venezuela. He said Washington fears "the examples of solidarity and internationalism represented by the Cuban Revolution and Bolivarian Venezuela," such as the Cuban doctors serving in Venezuela and now Bolivia.

Carlos Lazo, first secretary of the Venezuelan mission to the United Nations, noted that his government is using Venezuela's oil income "for the development of health, education, and housing." He said, "The only threat we represent for Yankee imperialism is the achievement of these goals and setting an example for humanity."

"We have to continue these mobilizations," said William Camacaro of the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle, a Venezuela solidarity group in New York. "Venezuela is an engine for changes taking place in Latin America today."

"We are for the immediate normalization of economic relations with Cuba," said Juan José Gutiérrez, a leader of the Los Angeles–based International May 1 Coalition. The U.S. embargo against Cuba "has been a failed foreign policy for 40 years, and we don't want to see that done in relation to Venezuela." The May 1 Coalition was among the forces that initiated the April 10 and May 1 demonstrations for the legalization of undocumented immigrants.

The rally was the first nationwide action organized by a recently formed Venezuela Solidarity Network, working together with the National Network on Cuba. The sponsors included dozens of local Cuba and Venezuela solidarity committees and other political organizations.

Campaign to free the Cuban Five

Rally organizers read a message from Leonard Weinglass, one of the attorneys for the Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramon Labañino—who have spent the last eight years in U.S. prisons. They were convicted and given long sentences in a 2001 frame-up trial. Last August a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals threw out all of the convictions and ordered a retrial. Government attorneys are seeking a reversal of that decision by the full court of appeals.

"We are now awaiting word on whether or not the federal appellate court in Atlanta will hold firm to its initial determination," Weinglass said. "It's not a time to relax our efforts to free the five."

Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban National Assembly, also sent a message to the rally. "We appreciate your solidarity in our struggle for independence and justice in the face of the imperialist aggression that our people have been resisting, heroically and successfully for over 47 years," he said.

Many of the protesters pointed to the efforts the Venezuelan and Cuban governments are carrying out to extend health care and educational programs to workers and peasants in Venezuela, Bolivia, and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

"I went with a group of students to the World Youth Festival," said Amory Ballantine, a student at Oakton Community College near Chicago, referring to the international anti-imperialist youth gathering that was held in Caracas last August. "I saw a lot of the social programs that Chávez had started. I decided I had to see more, so I stayed on for five months."

"I spoke to one of the Cuban doctors," said Sheila Jain, 26, an epidemiologist who participated in the World Social Forum in Caracas in January. She had just finished medical school and "didn't even think twice when asked to volunteer in Venezuela," she said.

"You're taught in school that America helps everybody," said Kirstin Williams, a high school student from Decatur, Georgia. "But when the war broke out against Iraq I started to see the truth. Then I heard about the Cuban Five."

At a simultaneous rally in Los Angeles that drew about 120 people, high school teacher Brian Johnstone said Venezuela and Cuba must be defended against U.S. threats because "they have both established a path independent of U.S. control." He had traveled to Venezuela for last year's World Youth Festival.

"One of the things Washington fears most is the example of the Cuban Revolution," said Naomi Craine, of the Socialist Workers Party, addressing the Los Angeles rally. "A revolution that produces doctors who go to Venezuela, Bolivia, and Haiti; that produces people who go to Angola to fight to defeat the racist South African regime."

On May 20 similar actions also took place in Toronto and Vancouver, Canada; Madrid, Spain; and Sydney, Australia. In Miami, 100 people, in their majority Cuban-Americans, rallied at the Federal Building to protest U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba.

Militant/Ben Joyce

May 20 march of 500 in Washington demanded "U.S. Hands Off Venezuela and Cuba"

U.S jailers attack protesting Guantánamo prisoners

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

A number of prisoners being held indefinitely at the U.S. detention camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, engaged in protests and were attacked by their jailers May 18. Guards fired rubber shotgun pellets and a "sponge grenade" that injured six prisoners, according to U.S. authorities at the camp.

Earlier in the day four prisoners attempted suicide, camp officials told Agence France-Presse. There have been 41 "confirmed" suicide attempts by 25 different prisoners since the camp was set up four years ago, Rear Admiral Harry Harris reported.

Since January 2002 the U.S. government has imprisoned hundreds on the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo, territory held against the will of the Cuban people. The detention camp was set up after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan the year before. Labeled "enemy combatants" by U.S. authorities, the prisoners have been denied due process. They have not been charged with any crimes or allowed any access to the outside world. Military officials report that about 460 are currently jailed at Guantánamo.

The camp guard commander, Col. Michael Baumgarner, told the media May 19 that about 100 extra military personnel were called in to restore control, the Voice of America reported. He claimed that about 10 prisoners lured a group of guards into a bunkhouse through a fake suicide attempt and then attacked them with makeshift weapons.

Baumgarner reported that the incident occurred in a medium-security section of the prison and spread to two other bunkhouses. He said prisoners destroyed cameras stationed to observe their movements.

The following day, the United Nations Committee against Torture released a report urging the U.S. government to close the Guantánamo detention camp and "permit access by the detainees to judicial process or release them as soon as possible."

"This is a different kind of war," U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice told Fox News Sunday May 21, justifying the Guantánamo camp as needed in the "war on terrorism."

"We don't want to be the world's jailer," Rice declared. But the indefinite detention policy at the prison camp, she said, was necessary for "making certain that people don't return to the battlefield."

Government undercounts job injuries

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

A recent study by researchers at Michigan State University (MSU) reported on the government undercount of on-the-job injuries. "How much work-related injury and illness is missed by the current national surveillance system?" asked the authors in an article published in the April issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.* Their answer: the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) fails to count about two-thirds of such incidents.

The government uses only employer records to reach its conclusions. The campus researchers used Workers' Compensation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other reports in addition to those of the BLS. The MSU study estimated there were on average about 869,000 work-related injuries and illnesses in Michigan each year in 1999–2001, compared to the BLS's finding of 281,567. About 1 in 5 workers became ill or injured in that three-year period, according to the MSU research, while the BLS arrived at a ratio of 1 in 15.

Nearly half of all injuries reported in the MSU study occurred in manufacturing or construction, another 20 percent in services, and close to 17 percent in retail and wholesale trade.

One reason for the BLS undercount is that it excludes from its analysis those who are self-employed, workers on farms with fewer than 11 employees, federal employees, and public workers in about half the states. The MSU researchers also concluded that employers have an incentive to underreport in order to avoid insurance or regulatory costs.

At the same time, companies often pressure their employees to work injured. As the *Militant* reported in its Dec. 21, 2004, issue, the bosses at the Arch Minerals Dugout Canyon mine in Price, Utah, maintain a bonus program under which all workers lose 20 percent of their bonus each time a miner reports an on-the-job injury. Workers there told the *Militant* it's common for an individual to labor injured rather than be held responsible for their co-workers losing their bonus income.

The MSU researchers say their own study may also undercount the number of workers whose job conditions cause illness or injury. Both the BLS and Workers' Compensation databases, they say, "are likely to miss illnesses with long latency periods such as pneumoconiosis [often known as black lung disease] and cancer."

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA
Miami

Legalization Now! Unconditional Residency for All Immigrants. Fri., June 2. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m.

The Jewish Question: The Danger for the Workers Movement of the Israel Lobby Conspiracy Theory. Fri., June 9. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 8365 NE 2nd Ave., room 206. Tel.: (305) 756-4436.

IOWA
Des Moines

U.S. Hands Off Cuba and Venezuela! Speaker: Kevin Dwire, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 2. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. Tel.: (515) 255-1707.

NEW JERSEY
Newark

Oppose Imperialist Intervention in Sudan. Speaker: Sara Lobman, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 2, 8:00 p.m. 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd Floor. Tel.: (973) 481-0077.

NEW YORK
Manhattan

Cuba, Venezuela Provide Medical, Literacy and Other Aid to Bolivia. Speaker: Luis Madrid, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 2. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. 307 W. 36th Street, 10th floor (near 8th Ave.) Tel.: (212) 629-6649.

SWEDEN
Stockholm

Celebrate Utah Miners' Victory in Dropping of Co-Op Mine Lawsuit! Sat., June 3, 5:00 p.m. Bilduggarvägen 17 Johanneshov. Tel.: 46 08 31 69 33.

‘We won battle at Co-Op mine’

Continued from front page

together in this fight have been strengthened for union organizing and safety in the mines, for the legalization of undocumented immigrants, and other struggles of workers in the West and elsewhere,” Estrada said.

Among the 35 participants who filled the forum hall were five members of the Drill Team of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, garment workers, airline workers, meat packers, rail workers, a school bus driver, and other trade unionists. Also attending was an activist from a center for day laborers in San Francisco’s Mission District and a representative of the San Jose immigrant rights organization Voluntarios de la Comunidad (Community Volunteers). Estrada spoke the previous night at a Militant Labor Forum in Los Angeles attended by 30 people.

He spoke here as part of a series of forums around the country (see calendar on front page). The same weekend Alyson Kennedy, a participant in the Co-Op struggle, spoke in Seattle, and Paul Mailhot, organizer of the Militant Fighting Fund, spoke in Birmingham.

“Safety issues and working conditions were a big concern of the miners at Co-Op and one of the main reasons we reached out to the United Mine Workers of America [UMWA] for help,” Estrada told the crowd. He pointed to the five coal miners who had died the day before in an explosion at a nonunion mine in Harlan County, Kentucky.

“That’s 31 deaths in U.S. coal mines so far this year. The coal companies are trying to get as much coal out of the ground, as fast as they can, while there is a worldwide coal boom,” said Estrada. “We need to unionize the mines. That way we can mobilize union power to protect ourselves, including walking out of the mines when the conditions become too dangerous. With our union safety committees leading the way, mining can be done safely and not a single miner has to die.”

Estrada described the fight that 75 coal miners waged at C.W. Mining Company’s Co-Op mine. The company is part of a network of businesses in Utah and other western states owned by the Kingston family.

“The miners, mostly Mexican-born, won every round of this struggle, from the day we walked out to the settlement agreement that has just been achieved,” Estrada said.

“We reached out to UMWA locals and other unions for solidarity in Utah and around the country, including a trip by four miners to San Francisco in early 2004 to ask for help from unions here,” Estrada explained. “ILWU Local 10 responded by donating funds and by sending 17 members of its drill team to our February 7 rally in Huntington.”

Josh Williams, a founder of the union’s drill team in 1966, attended the forum. He introduced Trevyn McCoy, a current drill team captain, who described the ILWU members’ Utah trip. “It made us feel great and proud to be part of that union fight,” McCoy said.

Militant/Teri Moss

ILWU Local 10 drill team from San Francisco at picket line at Co-Op mine Feb. 7, 2004.

“The buses with the longshore workers and the vehicles caravanning up to the mine were supposed to just drive by the picket line,” said Estrada. “They all got their drill team routine going and began chanting. The miners staffing the picket line joined them. The coal bosses drove by and could not believe what they saw. The local paper covered it. It made a mark,” said Estrada.

Company backs down, rehires miners

As the strike reached 10 months and the miners were winning growing support in the labor movement and beyond, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) responded by brokering an agreement that resulted in the company taking all the workers back into the mine in July 2004. The NLRB set a date for a union representation election for later that year. In another blow to the company, the board ruled that relatives of the mine owners were ineligible to vote in that election.

In September 2004, C.W. Mining and its closely associated International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU) filed a defamation lawsuit in federal court in Salt Lake City against nearly 100 defendants. Those charged in the lawsuit included 16 Co-Op coal miners, the UMWA, the *Militant*, and the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Deseret Morning News*—Utah’s two largest dailies. The lawsuit contained several other charges against the miners, the UMWA, and other defendants, including civil conspiracy, intent to disrupt economic activity, and invasion of privacy.

The lawsuit was amended and refiled in December 2004, on the eve of the union representation vote.

Shortly before the union vote, the company also fired 30 miners, claiming it had recently discovered the work-

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Christchurch	**20**	**19**	**95%**
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Amherst, MA	**6**	**5**	**83%**
Seattle	**145**	**120**	**83%**
Twin Cities	**200**	**165**	**83%**
Des Moines*	**205**	**161**	**79%**
San Francisco*	**110**	**87**	**79%**
Miami	**160**	**123**	**77%**
Newark	**165**	**125**	**76%**
Boston	**85**	**64**	**75%**
Los Angeles	**170**	**128**	**75%**
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Albany, NY	15	11	73%
Atlanta	90	63	70%
New York	325	227	70%
Birmingham	105	72	69%
Philadelphia	130	90	69%
Chicago	100	68	68%
Tampa	15	10	67%
Houston	140	93	66%
Price	65	39	60%
Pittsburgh	60	26	43%
Detroit	20	5	25%
U.S. Total	2406	1753	73%
SWEDEN	35	22	63%
Int’l totals	**2758**	**2038**	**68%**
Goal/Should be	**3000**	**2250**	**75%**
***increased quota**			

Continued from front page

job—33 workers sacrificed at the altar of the bosses’ profit greed since the beginning of this year. A working-class answer to this is outlined in the editorial on the front page. Circulating the article that outlines the accomplishments of the former Co-Op miners in Utah in their struggle for a union (see above) will also be a significant contribution to the discussion among coal miners and other working people on how to effectively fight the bosses’ offensive and win.

This is the time to once again organize subscription teams to the coalfields—from Appalachia to the Illinois Basin, the Western mines, and those in the South—like those *Militant* supporters fielded in February after the Sago Mine disaster. Now is the time to reach out to thousands of other miners as well—at copper, gold, iron, and other mines. The recent mine disaster in China and the near-fatal trapping of gold miners in Australia reported in this issue show that the same response is needed worldwide.

Because the stakes in the fight for safety on the job affect the working class as a whole, a similar outreach effort is called for in every city and region where there are *Militant* readers.

A couple of notes from readers indicate what’s possible. “Gerardo Sánchez and I accompanied Bill Estrada, a leader of the struggle in Utah to unionize the Co-Op mine, in visiting trade unionists and immigration rights fighters in the San Jose area,” wrote Joel Britton from San Francisco. “We were at a house meeting with six of the Voluntarios de la Comunidad (Community Volunteers), an immigrant rights organization that was one of the principal organizers of the 100,000-strong May 1 demonstration there. About a dozen people were gathering for a training session of the volunteers led by José Sandoval, an organizer of the group.

“After Bill’s presentation, Gerardo Sánchez urged the volunteers present to subscribe to the *Militant*. He passed out copies to everyone. Out of the dozen people there, seven subscribed and three bought copies of last week’s issue.”

“Ved Dookhun and I sold the *Militant* today to miners leaving and entering work at a cluster of mines in Harlan County, Kentucky, along State Route 38,” Sam Manuel, a *Militant* reporter in Washington, currently in the area covering recent events, said in a May 24 note. “Twenty miners bought copies of the paper. ‘I’m not union but that’s what we need in the mines,’ said one who works in a nearby Massey-run mine. Massey is a notorious nonunion outfit.

“‘Having a union would make a difference,’ said another, who works at the prep plant at the Lone Mountain mine, next to the Darby mine where five miners died last week. Another young miner suggested that we leave a bundle of the papers to sell at a Chevron station where many workers stop to get snacks and refreshments before going to work. We decided to stay for a couple of more days and sell this week’s issue.”

You can do the same. Order a bundle, if you don’t already receive one, to help convince others to subscribe (see contact information on page 2). Or join other distributors nearest you in teams they organize (see directory on page 8).

On to 3,000 new subscribers by June 7!

Sincerely,
Argiris Malapanis, Editor

$90,000 ‘Militant’ Fund Drive
April 15–June 7 ♦ Week 5 of 7

Country	Quota	Paid	%
ICELAND	**200**	**354**	**177%**
CANADA*	**2,500**	**2,529**	**101%**
FRANCE	**250**	**213**	**85%**
UNITED STATES			
Tampa	**300**	**350**	**117%**
Albany	**100**	**100**	**100%**
Atlanta*	**4,500**	**4,280**	**95%**
Birmingham*	**2,000**	**1,741**	**87%**
Miami*	**2,400**	**1,968**	**82%**
San Francisco	**8,500**	**6,855**	**81%**
Newark	**3,500**	**2,735**	**78%**
Boston*	**3,550**	**2,730**	**77%**
Seattle	**8,000**	**6,053**	**76%**
Des Moines*	**2,100**	**1,569**	**75%**
Chicago	**5,500**	**4,074**	**74%**
Houston*	**3,500**	**2,570**	**73%**
Twin Cities	**4,800**	**3,445**	**72%**
New York	12,000	8,365	70%
Philadelphia	3,200	1,911	60%
Los Angeles	8,500	4,765	56%
Washington, DC	2,500	1,153	46%
Pittsburgh*	4,200	1,565	37%
Price	3,000	940	31%
Other		1,290	
U.S. Total	**82,150**	**58,459**	**71%**
AUSTRALIA*	1,200	760	63%
NEW ZEALAND			
Christchurch*	885	548	62%
Auckland	1,500	963	64%
N.Z. Total	2,385	1,511	63%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinbourgh	600	350	58%
London	1,200	739	62%
UK	1,800	1,089	61%
SWEDEN	640	330	52%
Int’l totals	**91,125**	**65,245**	**72%**
Goal/Should be	**90,000**	**64,300**	**71%**
*increased quota			

—ON THE PICKET LINE

New Zealand: Sailors from Ukraine protest low wages

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Holding placards demanding "pay us our wages" and "we are on strike," 27 Ukrainian seamen picketed outside the Port of Lyttelton here May 11. Recruited by Ukrrybflot, a state-owned Ukrainian company in partnership with Christchurch-based United Fisheries, about 65 seamen had come to New Zealand to work the *Malakhov Kurgan*. After spending four months at sea they were paid just US$2.30 a day, far below the minimum wage of NZ$10.25 an hour (NZ$1=US 63 cents). Facing abysmal working conditions as well as low pay, crew members occupied the ship. They have won backing from the Maritime Union of New Zealand.

—Baskaran Appu and Ruth Gray

Salt miners on strike in Ontario win support

GODERICH, Ontario—A strike by some 350 salt miners against the Sifto Salt company is holding firm and attracting solidarity from the labor movement in the area. The workers, who are members of Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union Local 16-0, walked out April 14. The massive mine, which is 1,750 feet deep, one and a half miles wide, and extends two miles under Lake Huron, supplies a major portion of the North American market. The workers voted by 99 percent to strike after the bosses handed them a take-it-or-leave-it offer that ignored their demands for an end to forced overtime, contracting out of union jobs, company respect for seniority, improvements to the benefits plan, and a 4 percent wage increase.

—Annette Kouri and John Steele

Militant/John Steele

Salt miners on strike in Goderich, Ontario, picket the Sifto Salt plant May 13.

New Zealand event promotes book by Chinese-Cuban generals

BY JANET ROTH

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The Descarga Cubana cafe here was packed April 30 for a discussion on *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, published by Pathfinder.

The meeting featured Mike Tucker, a member of the National Committee of the Communist League (CL), who had helped promote it and similar books at the Havana International Book Fair this year. Nick Fowler of the Young Socialists, Baskaran Appu of the CL in Christchurch, and Brigid Mulrennan, a volunteer in the Pathfinder printing project, also spoke.

Six Cuban internationalists who are helping develop a literacy program in this country, four workers originally from China, and members of the Cuba Friendship Society took part in the event.

Fowler said he had been part of a group studying *Our History Is Still Being Written.* He drew attention to the sections describing the Cuban people's role in Angola in helping defeat the invading South African apartheid army.

The history of Chinese in Cuba runs parallel to that of Chinese immigration throughout the Americas and also into New Zealand, Appu said. "Under an 1881 law here, the number of Chinese who could arrive on one ship was limited to one for every 10 tons of ship cargo. A poll tax was also imposed on each Chinese entering the country. The tax wasn't abolished until 1944. English-language tests were also used to keep Chinese out."

Today, thousands of Chinese come here "and still face many barriers," Appu said. Hailing those rallying for immigrant rights in the United States, he said, "We can be sure the same confidence is brewing among workers here as well. Such workers can draw on the lessons and experiences of the Cuban Revolution as discussed by the Chinese-Cuban generals."

Tucker said the aim of the event was to promote use of the book "as a tool to win workers and youth to socialism, a genuine introduction to the Cuban Revolution."

He noted that anti-Chinese discrimination is not a historic question, as shown by the reactionary attack unleashed against people of Chinese descent in the Solomon Islands April 18. "Anger was turned on the Chinese, while those who dominate the Solomons, the imperialist rulers of Australia and New Zealand, were able to use these events to justify enforcing their military and police presence, in violation of that country's sovereignty."

He pointed to the medical aid Cuba is providing in East Timor, the poorest country in Asia. "What did the rulers of Australia and New Zealand do after 1999 when they placed East Timor under their military occupation? The New Zealand government established a prison system and trained police and prison guards. What the Cuban example represents is a different class approach."

After the program most of the 40 people present stayed for food, drinks, and a slide show on the Havana book fair. A collection raised NZ$204 (US$126) to assist distributing books like *Our History.*

Pathfinder books now for sale through Amazon.com

BY JIM ALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO—Many books on revolutionary working-class politics published by Pathfinder Press can now be purchased on Amazon.com. For some time, Pathfinder books were listed on the site of the widely used online retailer but were not available for sale. Now 40 titles

PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

can be ordered from Amazon, including *Our History Is Still Being Written* (see ad below), issue 12 of the Marxist magazine *New International* featuring "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun," *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution,* and titles by Malcolm X and Ernesto Che Guevara.

Amazon also allows publishers, bookstores, and individuals to sell books on their site. By clicking on the "used and new" link under any Pathfinder title you can locate "booksfrompathfinder." This is Pathfinder's online link for selling around 150 titles on the Amazon site. Orders placed that way are filled within two days. In the two months since volunteers have been setting up the Amazon listings, orders have come in from soldiers and students, along with booksellers in the United States and Canada. Readers in the United Kingdom can visit Amazon.uk.com for a wide selection of Pathfinder books as well.

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Bookstores and libraries will now find it easier to place orders with Pathfinder by using an electronic data system called Pubnet. Using Pubnet, orders can be placed with hundreds of publishers at once, simply by entering each title's ISBN (International Standard Book Identification Number). Bookstore inventory programs can be tied directly into Pubnet for automatic reorders. This system saves bookstore and library buyers an enormous amount of time when ordering.

Pathfinder volunteers are now working with some of the large library wholesalers, who also order books from publishers through Pubnet, to add Pathfinder titles to library approval and standing order plans. These arrangements enable participating libraries to automatically receive every new Pathfinder title as it is released.

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The spring 2006 issue of *Libros, Libros*, an online publication of the Chicano Studies Department of the University of Texas at El Paso, carries reviews of *Our History Is Still Being Written* and three other books published by Pathfinder on the Cuban Revolution. *Our History* was also reviewed in the March 2006 *Midwest Book Review's* Internet Bookwatch.

For Further Reading

Our History Is Still Being Written

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

Armando Choy
Gustavo Chui
Moisés Sío Wong

$20. ***Special price: $15*** through May 28 with a *Militant* subscription.

WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

June 5, 1981

Reagan administration sources have acknowledged that the U.S. government has carried out military raids against Laos. The attacks were launched on the pretext that the Laotians may be holding hundreds of U.S. personnel (described as "missing in action" or MIAs) as prisoners.

The first attack was reportedly intercepted by Laotian troops and a firefight resulted, according to a *New York Post* quotation from an Associated Press dispatch. There was no confirmation of casualties on either side. There were no reports of fighting during a subsequent raid.

U.S. military probes against Laos have nothing to do with the MIA issue. Washington is seeking to step up military, economic, and diplomatic pressure against Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea.

June 4, 1956

A boycott begun by the Negro people of New Orleans has hit the pocketbooks of the Southern Baseball Association so hard that the league is faced with going out of business. It has, of course, the alternative that Southern Negroes are demanding—abandonment of the lily-white player rule and of segregated seating in the ball parks.

The boycott began about a year ago without any publicity or formal organization. Southern ball club owners and the newspapers tried to prevent its spreading by saying nothing about it. Yet it spread and has cut deeply into gate receipts. Its is estimated that at some parks attendance is 20 percent lower than in previous years.

None of the eight teams in the Southern Association has a single Negro player. All parks have segregated seating.

June 1, 1931

The Scottsboro case affords the party an opportunity, which it has seized, to draw nearer to the masses of Negro workers. It involves nine Negro working class boys. The charge is the usual one—rape. The defendants are transparently innocent. The trial was a farce. Elementary democratic rights were violated. Although the defendants were all minors, defense counsel did not consult their parents for permission to conduct the defense. Their parents were not even notified of their arrest and trial.

All this makes it possible to appeal to broad masses of Negroes on the basis of their racial persecution to smash this capitalist frame-up. This the party has done by giving leadership in the growing protest and defense movement to the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, and by appealing to all classes of the Negro population, and the entire Negro press to join in the fight.

Co-Op miners' victory

Continued from page 4

ers did not have proper papers to prove they were eligible to work legally in the United States. Many of the fired miners had been employed by the company for years.

The UMWA again filed unfair labor practices charges against the company, explaining that the workers were terminated to prevent them from voting in the union representation election.

That election proceeded on Dec. 16, 2004, with the fired workers voting. The NLRB impounded the ballots of the fired miners pending its ruling on the union's charges.

"Unable to defeat us on the picket line, as we were gaining strength, the bosses succeeded in shifting the focus away from the mine and into the courts and into further NLRB proceedings," said Estrada. "The headway they made for a time on this course was possible because broader labor action wasn't brought to bear in the fight against the company."

"There was a several-month period, leading up to and after our return to work, where further steps toward organization of the western coal mines was possible," said Estrada.

Workers in nearby coal mines were looking at the example set by the Co-Op miners, said Estrada. A group of coal truck drivers contacted the union about getting organized. There were discussions about setting up a picket line outside the area power plants where coal from Co-Op was being used. There were also possibilities to involve rail workers in the struggle in a new way.

"But the miners couldn't carry this struggle by ourselves," Estrada said. "We had limited experience in fighting this kind of battle. We were scrambling to find jobs to make ends meet. We needed more help from the broader union movement than we had been able to win up to that point. As a result, we weren't able to take advantage of the real possibilities then to make advances in union organizing."

The NLRB took a full year to issue its preliminary determination on the unfair labor practice charges filed by the union, but it finally came down against the company, said Estrada. An NLRB declaration issued by the board's Region 27 director on Dec. 9, 2005, states that C.W. Mining "has been discriminating in regard to hire or tenure or terms and conditions of employment of its employees, thereby discouraging membership in a labor organization."

A trial was scheduled before an NLRB administrative law judge, where the NLRB attorneys would present their case for reaching these conclusions and the company would have the opportunity to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses in an attempt to reverse the NLRB's findings.

A separate ruling by NRLB Region 27 Director Allan Benson on April 19, 2006, determined that six of the Co-Op miners were entitled to back pay for their firing. Miners explained that the government body determined that the rest of the Co-Op miners were not eligible for back pay or reinstatement at the mine because they had failed to demonstrate they had proper work documents.

"What the Co-Op miners fought through points to why the fight for legalization of the millions of undocumented workers in this country is so important," Estrada noted.

The ability of undocumented workers to maintain a job under these conditions can be won in struggle, Estrada added. He cited the example of the Wolverine meat plant in Detroit, where the boss fired 21 workers who did not go to work on March 27 in order to join an immigrant rights demonstration. Management threatened it would only take back the workers if they proved they had valid work documents. But the strength of those street mobilizations resulted in Wolverine backing down and the workers returning to their jobs.

Court ruling another blow to Co-Op

On May 1, federal district court judge Dee Benson issued his ruling on the motions to dismiss the federal lawsuit that had been filed by the remaining defendants in the case. He said the company had not established a valid defamation case against the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Desert Morning News* and dismissed the lawsuit against those papers. Benson ordered the company and the IAUWU to pay attorneys fees and court costs to those newspapers. Attorneys for the two dailies have since filed court papers requesting $120,000 in payments.

Militant/Joel Britton

Bill Estrada addresses members of Voluntarios de la Comunidad, an immigrant rights group in San Jose, California, May 22. To his right is José Sandoval, a leader of the group.

In that same ruling Judge Benson also dismissed the entire case against the 16 coal miner defendants, saying, "Laborers are entitled to their opinions. They are entitled to express those opinions, whether in the midst of a labor dispute or not."

In throwing out the coal bosses' claims the judge stated, "Plaintiffs' allegations against the defendant miners seem to be nothing more than an attempt to intimidate their employees and quell honest discussion concerning labor issues." He also dismissed all other charges against the miners and other defendants.

"The judge's decision cut the heart out of their lawsuit," Estrada told the audience. "They were left with a very weak defamation case against the UMWA, the *Militant*, and Utah Jobs with Justice."

When the judge's ruling was combined with the NLRB determination that C.W. Mining had fired the miners for union activity, it was clear the unionists had effectively stood off the company in every attempt they made to defeat us, said Estrada.

"It is not surprising that the Kingstons decided at this point that an agreement to end the lawsuit was in their interest," said Estrada. "The company has had this struggle on their backs during one of the biggest coal booms in U.S. history. They want to get their production back to what it was before our strike."

As part of the agreement reached by the attorney for the miners and those representing C.W. Mining and the IAUWU, the lawsuit is dropped against all the defendants including the UMWA and the *Militant*. The UMWA agreed to drop its unfair labor charges practices against the company, and the company agreed to give back pay to the six workers the NLRB deemed eligible to receive it.

"We didn't give up a single thing in reaching this agreement. When it came right down to it, only one UMWA supporter, Alyson Kennedy, was going to be eligible to exercise her right to return to work," said Estrada. "This would have been the case even if the votes in favor of the UMWA were counted. But Alyson and the other miners had determined long ago that we didn't want to be part of a UMWA local in name only.

"However, it is very important to note that nothing in this agreement prevents UMWA backers from organizing again at this mine," Estrada said. "If a majority of workers at Co-Op sign cards tomorrow, or six months or a year from now, in favor of being represented by

Continued on page 9

Co-Op Miners Victory Rally

Sunday, June 4
1:00 p.m.

UMWA District 22 Hall
525 East 100 South
Price, Utah

For more information call (435) 637-2037

'Your support for our struggle was critical'

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—To a standing ovation, Harold Ugles, president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19 in Seattle, introduced Alyson Kennedy, a participant in the union fight at the Co-op mine in Huntington, Utah, to delegates attending the Longshore Division Caucus Meeting here May 22. The delegates were from locals representing 14,000 longshore workers on the West Coast of the United States.

"Your support for our struggle, along with backing from unions across the country and internationally, was critical in helping the Co-op miners and the UMWA win against C.W. Mining every step of the way, up to the final settlement agreement," Kennedy told the delegates. She invited them to join in the June 4 celebration in Price, Utah.

"The ILWU drill team sent from San Francisco to the picket line in Huntington had a big impact on our struggle," said Kennedy. "So did the ILWU local meetings that Co-Op miners were invited to, as well as your generous financial support." More than $17,000 was donated by West Coast Longshore locals to help coal miners at Co-op in their battle for union representation.

"The lessons of this fight are important," Kennedy said. "Without a fighting union we will never have safety in the mines. That was one of the most important issues our fight was about.

"Our struggle also highlighted the life-and-death struggle for the labor movement to fight for the legalization of all immigrants. This issue will not go away. The demonstrations for immigrant rights and the struggle of immigrant miners in Utah are an example for all of us."

After a second standing ovation following Kennedy's presentation, Ugles made a motion, which was adopted, to send representatives to the June 4 celebration in Price. The Canadian Vice President of the ILWU, Tim Footman, approached Kennedy after the meeting and offered support.

❖

BY JOEL BRITTON

SAN JOSE, California—A robust ovation greeted former Co-Op miner Bill Estrada following an introduction by Joan Emsley of the South Bay Labor Council, an AFL-CIO body, at its monthly meeting here May 22. Estrada reported to the three dozen delegates from union locals in San Mateo County on the victory won by the pro-UMWA miners in Utah over the bosses at C.W. Mining.

The meeting capped a busy day that started at the offices of UNITE HERE Local 2 in San Francisco and continued at ILWU Local 10. Estrada was able to meet briefly with Farless Dailey, secretary-treasurer of local 10, and later with John Ulrich of local 101 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union in South San Francisco.

Another high point of the day was Estrada's presentation, this time in Spanish, to a dozen members of Voluntarios de la Comunidad (Community Volunteers), at a house meeting in a working class barrio in Redwood City. The "Voluntarios" were helped lead the May 1 march of 100,000 in San Jose demanding legal residency for undocumented immigrants.

Kentucky miners killed

Continued from front page

Amon Brock, 51; Jimmy Lee, 33; Roy Middleton, 35; and George Petra, 49. A sixth miner, Paul Ledford, survived.

Another coal miner, Steven Bryant, 23, was killed on the job May 23 at the Risner Branch No. 2 mine in Rousseau, Breathitt County. That mine, also in eastern Kentucky, is owned by Miller Brothers Coal LLC. According to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Bryant's water truck, with which he sprinkled the coal-haul roads to keep the dust down, overturned and fatally crushed him. He was the 11th coal miner to die on the job in Kentucky this year.

These deaths brought the toll at U.S. coal mines this year to 32, compared to 22 for all of 2005.

State officials are trying to attribute the mounting toll to the nature of the industry. "Coal mining is a hazardous job for the many men and women who choose it as their livelihood," Fletcher said in a statement after Bryant's death.

Many of the miners interviewed by the *Militant* see it differently.

"Production and profits come first for the company, not our safety," said a worker at the Darby No. 1 mine, who asked that his name not be used for fear of victimization by the company. "It should be the other way around.

"We need a union, now," he added.

"All they want to do is make money," said Willard Taylor, who runs a motorcycle shop in Clarksville, Tennessee. "It's all about profits and keeping their pocketbook happy," he said, referring to Kentucky Darby and other coal companies in the area. "They don't care if you have kids. They don't care about safety."

His brother Russell Taylor agreed. "Many of the mines here used to be union," he said. "We had more control of working conditions then. The mines were safer."

Today none of the mines in Harlan County, where much of the state's coal production is concentrated, are unionized, he and other miners pointed out.

In fact, most of Kentucky's mines are nonunion. The state is third in coal production in the country after Wyoming and West Virginia, according to the federal Energy Information Administration. That agency's statistics indicate that only 813 of more than 14,000 miners in the state's 608 coal mines were members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in 2004. The number of union members has since declined, after one of the larger organized mines in western Kentucky shut down, said UMWA communications director Phil Smith.

What led to deaths at Darby mine

Since the Darby mine began operations in 2001, 10 injuries had occurred there before the May 20 explosion, according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). During those five years MSHA issued 265 citations for safety violations at the mine, the federal agency's statistics show, 83 of which were for excessive levels of coal dust and methane, a highly flammable gas released from coal as it is mined.

MSHA fined the mine $27,651 for all these infractions. The company paid $23,270.

"State and federal inspectors knew all about these violations," Bill Adams, a retired miner who worked 31 years underground, said in an interview. "Why didn't they ever shut it down until the company fixed the problems?"

Methane gas that may have leaked through seals from a closed-off section of the mine, mixed with high levels of coal dust, could have led to the powerful blast, current and former federal mine inspectors told the press. The explosion likely originated in the sealed portion of the mine, several miners said.

"This is a gassy mine," Ronnie Farley, 21, told the *Militant* May 23, referring to the buildup of methane. Farley and his friend Mack Williams, 22, said they worked as roof bolters at the Kentucky Darby Mine No. 1 until two months ago, when they were laid off.

"The mine inspectors often overlook unsafe conditions," Williams said.

The company did not return phone calls from the *Militant.*

The blast was felt more than 5,000 feet from its estimated point of origin, knocking people on the mine surface off their feet and spewing rocks and other debris above ground, said Clark Cusick, a miner at Kentucky Darby. Cusick, who has worked at the mine for a year and a half, said he got off second shift at 12:45 a.m., about half an hour before the explosion. He said the sealed portion of the mine was closed off with Omega Block, a fiberglass-type substance. While the material is approved by MSHA, it is less resistant than concrete block.

In addition, mine safety inspectors said May 23, the company used a sealant to hold the blocks together made of a plastic foam–type substance that is more prone to leaks than concrete.

"The seals need to be replaced. They should use only concrete, which is more costly but safer," Cusick said.

The UMWA has the same position, said Phil Smith. "In a union mine, workers can use the safety committee to shut the mine down until safety violations are fixed without fear of losing their jobs," he said. "Many nonunion companies intimidate people by threatening to fire them if they report safety problems."

Cusick said he agreed with other miners that at least three of his co-workers who perished after being trapped by the blast some 3,000 feet underground could have survived if they had more oxygen in their self-rescuers. Miners carry these oxygen-supply devices in case of emergency.

Harlan County coroner Philip Bianchi told the press that two of the miners died from the impact of the explosion and three from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Following the Sago Mine disaster in West Virginia, where 12 miners were trapped underground after a blast and died after running out of oxygen, MSHA issued emergency regulations requiring companies to provide self-rescuers with two hours of oxygen rather than one hour as currently required, said Smith. "But MSHA has allowed the operators to go for months without implementing the new rule, saying they need time to order new devices," the UMWA official said.

Miners have reported that even the current devices often don't work properly. Jeff Ledford said in an interview published in the May 21 *Lexington Herald-Leader* that his brother Paul, who survived the Kentucky Darby blast, told him that his self-rescuer lasted only five minutes, not one hour. Paul Ledford reportedly passed out twice while crawling toward the mine's entrance.

From left, Jeremiah Eldridge, Odean Clark, and Marshall Woodard talk outside Clovefork Missionary Baptist Church May 20 near Darby Mine No. 1 in Holmes Mill, Kentucky, after five miners were killed there early that morning. Eldridge's father and three brothers are miners, Clark and Woodard are both retired coal miners.

A team of workers from the nearby Lone Mountain coal mine, the first on the scene, rescued the worker some three hours after the blast, Bill Blevitz, 19, a miner at Lone Mountain, told the *Militant.* Ledford was treated for injuries and later released from the hospital.

In a May 22 statement, acting MSHA administrator David Dye said the air pack of the miner who survived had worked properly. But Jeff Ledford told the press his brother stood by his description of events.

"I don't agree with MSHA," stated Cusick. "Paul Ledford is not lying."

"There should be a station in every mine fully equipped with food, water, blankets, and air, where miners can go until they are rescued," Ronnie Farley said.

Kentucky senator Mitchell McConnell told the press May 23 that the U.S. Senate is moving to pass new federal regulations requiring two hours of oxygen in self-rescuers.

Deteriorating conditions

Working conditions have worsened so much in the midst of the current boom in demand and higher coal prices that "many of us are terrified to see our loved ones going into the mines," said Brenda Greene, a retired worker who came to the area May 23 for the wake of her relative, Paris Thomas. When she divorced her husband, a miner, a few years ago, she took her two kids and moved from Harlan County to Georgia, "so my children wouldn't become miners," she said. "I don't see what else can be done."

"The spotters often don't work," said a miner at the Ligett No. 2 mine in Harlan County who asked that his name not be used. He was referring to the devices on mine equipment that warn for high levels of methane. "Today inspectors shut the mine because of a methane leak through the Omega seals," he said. Unlike Greene, this miner said organizing the mine would improve job conditions. "I'd like to see the union in," he said.

Some of the other workers interviewed agreed. "I am a union woman," said Bobbi Short, 72, who took part in a 1981 union march to demand compensation for miners who suffer from black lung disease. "Miners are getting killed today because they have no union to protect them."

"The UMWA is the only solution to get safety in the mines," said Bob Davis. "Those miners' deaths boil down to greed. There's a coal boom and the companies are offering big bonuses to get the coal out of the mines."

Davis said he was among 32 UMWA supporters who were fired during a campaign in the 1970s to organize mines at the nearby Brookside and Highsplint facilities.

Bill Adams, another retired miner, said he too was a veteran of that struggle, which is depicted in the well-known documentary *Harlan County, U.S.A.* "We helped the Brookside workers," said Adams, who worked at another mine.

Harlan County, U.S.A. documents the coal miners' strike against the Brookside Mine of the Eastover Company in 1973. Eastover's refusal to sign a contract, after the majority of the miners voted for the union, led to a walkout that lasted more than a year. During that struggle, picketing workers and their allies stood up to gun-toting company goons and scabs. A new screening of the film was recently released. The Brookside mine is now closed.

"We lost the union here," Adams said. "But the younger miners can bring it back. It's the only solution."

Ved Dookhun, Dave Ferguson, and Sam Manuel contributed to this article.

As we go to press...

Another miner killed on the job in W. Virginia

BY DAVE FERGUSON

HARLAN, Kentucky, May 24—A coal miner was killed this afternoon at the International Coal Group's Sycamore mine near Jarvisville, West Virginia. Reports indicate that the worker, whose name has not yet been released, was killed in an underground equipment accident. This fatality brings the number of coal mine deaths to 33 nationwide.

The International Coal Group, which also owns the Sago Mine in West Virginia, where 12 workers were killed in a mine explosion in January, reported revenues of $212 million for the quarter ending March 31—a 38 percent increase compared with the same period last year.

Nat'l Guard to U.S. border

Continued from front page

tary of defense for homeland defense, said in a May 18 news briefing. He said the temporary deployment—up to 6,000 in the first year and 3,000 in the second—will back up the Border Patrol as the federal cop force is expanded.

The deployment builds on steps taken under the Northern Command to lay the groundwork for greater militarization of the U.S. borders. Northcom, initiated by the Clinton administration, establishes for the first time a U.S. military command structure covering the entire continental United States. In a May 21 speech, former president William Clinton endorsed the White House's immigration proposals. "I basically think President Bush has done a good job with this," he stated, the Associated Press reported. In a May 15 speech Bush called for legislation to reinforce the Border Patrol, deploy National Guard troops to the border on a temporary basis, establish a "temporary worker" program, and allow for many undocumented immigrants to gain permanent residency under certain conditions.

English as the 'national language'

During the Congressional debate on an immigration bill, the Senate also voted 63–34 May 18 to approve a proposal by Sen. James Inhofe to make English the nation's "national language."

In an indication of the current divisions among the U.S. rulers on the immigration issue, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid termed this amendment "racist" in a speech on the Senate floor. "I think it's directed basically to people who speak Spanish," he said.

In a second amendment, the Senate voted to declare English the "common and unifying language" of the United States.

The day before, the Senate unanimously approved an amendment barring people with a past felony conviction or three misdemeanor convictions from becoming legal U.S. residents. The Senate also voted in favor of building a 370-mile fence along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexican border as well as 500 miles of vehicle barriers.

Meanwhile, 91 undocumented immigrants, crammed inside a box truck, were detained by Border Patrol cops May 18 near the border town of Sonoita, Arizona. The "coyote" driver escaped and the cops jailed all the workers, who are reportedly from Mexico and Central America.

At the Pentagon news conference, McHale said the proposed National Guard deployment to the border will include "surveillance and reconnaissance, engineering support, transportation support, logistics, vehicle dismantling, medical support, barrier and infrastructure construction, road building, and language support." Guard troops are to begin arriving for this mission starting in early June, said Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard.

In May 17 testimony before the Senate Appropriation Committee's defense subcommittee, Rumsfeld said, "Military forces will not be involved in apprehension or detention of illegal immigrants." The deployment is to be "on an interim basis as the Department of Homeland Security ramps up to a greater level of capability," the defense secretary said, referring to the beefing up of the Border Patrol.

McHale said the border mission will not only reinforce border "security" but will provide training "from a long-term perspective, to be better prepared for overseas warfighting, or domestic consequence management."

He added, "The National Guard missions will be substantially similar to the annual training missions executed as part of our counter-drug program along the southwest border during the past two decades." Some 400 Guard troops are already involved in antidrug operations on the border.

Militant/Brian Williams

Members of UNITE HERE and of the Chinese Progressive Association take part in May 20 march in New York City to demand legalization of immigrants.

N.Y. march for legalization of undocumented

Continued from front page

nerable to abuse and exploitation," said Chung Wha-Hong, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, one of the main sponsoring groups, at a press conference before the march.

Miguel Ramírez of the Centro Hispano Cuzcatlán said, "We demand nothing less than full legalization and driver's licenses for all immigrants. As long as economic hardships in our countries get worse, we will come."

Ramírez said the Queens-based group is sponsoring a vigil May 24 at the Manhattan offices of New York senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer to call attention to the thousands who have died while crossing into the United States from Mexico. Clinton has expressed her support for building a wall between the two countries.

"We must stop the exploitation of immigrant workers. As a union we must demand solidarity with all workers," said May Cheng, vice-president of UNITE HERE Local 23-25. She held a sign that read in Chinese and English, "We are immigrants, not criminals." About 100 unionists, including a number of retirees, marched in the UNITE HERE contingent.

"We aren't going anywhere," Porfirio Batiz, a building maintenance worker and member of SEIU Local 32BJ told the *Militant*, as he held up a large orange union banner with the slogan in Spanish "*Sí se puede*" (Yes, we can). "Since they're trying to send us back, we have to stand up for ourselves," he said.

Many demonstrators carried signs demanding "Legalization for all" in French, English and Spanish.

"They should make everyone legal. People here really work hard and should get the papers they need. These demonstrations should make a real impact," said Omar Koita, a member of the Forum of African Immigrants Associations, who marched in a contingent of West African immigrants.

Dozens of the march organizers wore orange T-shirts in support of the so-called Orange Card Program, proposed by Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein of California as an amendment to the Senate immigration bill that was. She describes it as an "earned legalization program" that would apply to undocumented immigrants who have been in the United States since Jan. 1, 2006.

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EDITORIALS

Unionize the mines!

Continued from front page
five men died May 20, "We need a union, now."

That's the necessary starting point. Not new and better government regulations or more federal and state mine safety inspectors, as many capitalist politicians propose after every major disaster, wagging their finger and promising improved laws.

There are already plenty of rules and regulations on the books. The coal barons routinely violate them with a slap on the wrist, at best.

No new laws, no additional government inspectors, have any meaning—unless a movement of workers fights to unionize the mines.

Only such a movement can put in the hands of the miners themselves the ability to decide job safety questions.

As we said in the February 6 issue, "With UMWA safety committees in every mine, coal miners can use union power to walk off the job if mine roofs are inadequately secured. They can refuse to work if explosive coal dust levels are high or very combustible gases are building up. They can insist on the repair of faulty conveyor belts, exposed wiring, or other defective equipment before any coal is cut. They can say no to the bypassing of safety devices on mine machinery."

Inspection of miners' air packs should be in the hands of union miners, not company "safety" personnel. The same is true of ensuring, before anyone begins their shift, that there is an adequate oxygen supply, easily accessible underground in case of emergency. Workers must be able to stop production if the company insists on using less costly but unreliable materials and leaky sealants to block off unused portions of the mine, a key issue in the Kentucky disaster.

"Left to their own profit greed, the coal bosses will never take such measures," we said in the earlier editorial. "With coal prices at record levels, they are stretching out the workweek, cranking up output, and slashing costs. They couldn't care less about the limbs, lungs—and lives—of workers. And as recent events show, government 'regulatory' agencies such as the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) either wink at violations or levy fines so small—a few hundred bucks for the most serious infractions—as to be contemptible."

In nonunion mines and other unorganized workplaces today, workers are often willing to speak out only on condition of anonymity in order to avoid firings or other retribution by the bosses. When writing an article to describe struggles on the job they are involved in, these workers often feel the need to use pen names. The union movement must unconditionally defend the right of these workers, so they can speak out about dangerous conditions before people die. And we must defend the right of pro-labor and other news media, to use these practices to shield workers from victimization by employers. This is one of the lessons of the Co-Op miners' fight for a union in Utah, the magnificent accomplishments of which are outlined in a front-page article this week.

The stakes are high for all working people, as the February 6 *Militant* pointed out. As competition for profits intensifies worldwide, the health and safety of workers and farmers are on the capitalists' chopping block along with our wages, pensions, medical care, and simple dignity on the job. With utter disregard for the human toll, employers are speeding up production in mines, mills, factories, and among rail and construction workers, truckers, and airline employees.

Capitalist politicians and the employers talk about the "inherently unsafe" nature of coal mining and other industries. Millions of working people know better. They see every day that they cannot rely on government inspectors, who are in fact beholden to the wealthy businesses they are supposedly regulating.

The labor movement needs to act on the basis that not a single miner has to die.

Support all struggles by miners to unionize!

China: 57 miners trapped in underground flood

AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Miners aid effort to rescue 57 co-workers trapped May 18 in a flood in the Xinjing Coal Mine, in northern China's Shanxi province. According to the *People's Daily*, the mine, which was licensed to produce 90,000 tons a year, produced 130,000 tons between March 2 and May 18 alone. Nine mine managers have been arrested. As of May 24, rescue crews had not yet reached the miners.

—PAUL PEDERSON

Utah miners' victory

Continued from page 6
the UMWA, the whole organizing fight can start again."

Celebration looks forward

"The celebration in Price on June 4 will take note of these accomplishments," Estrada said. "We have all learned a great deal in the course of this battle and we are better prepared for what's ahead.

"The UMWA members on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico and Arizona are getting ready for their contract fight with the Pittsburgh & Midway Coal Company. They will be coming on the 4th. Other workers, including West Coast longshore union members, will be there also. We are going to need to draw on each other in the coming battles and put what we have learned to work."

Estrada noted, "The deep-going fight for legalization for immigrants is under way. There are big stakes for the union movement in supporting this effort and weakening the bosses' ability to divide us. The fight for the extension of unions in this country is going to get intertwined with this and other social questions in the coming months. All of this will be part of our celebration of the accomplishments of the Co-Op strike."

At the meeting, a fund appeal was made for the Militant Fighting Fund. Members of the audience contributed $1,000 to help defray the *Militant*'s legal costs and expenses for Estrada's travel.

No to militarization of border

Working people should join in protests against the White House decision, approved by the Senate, to send thousands of National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border. While the Guard is limited to "logistical" support, its role is to allow the Border Patrol, the hated *migra* cops, to step up their arrests and deportations of immigrant workers.

This move aims not only to help the bosses control the flow of immigration in order to maintain a permanent pool of superexploited labor—whether as undocumented workers or as "guest" workers. It is also another step in the U.S. rulers' efforts to gain increased acceptance for the domestic use of the military, whose target will be working-class struggles.

In the first year, the planned three-week rotation of forces on the border will involve a total of 100,000 soldiers—one-fourth of the U.S. National Guard. Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld called this operation "useful, real-life training." And from the perspective of the class he represents, it certainly is.

Above all, it is "training" for the U.S. population—in the name of "homeland defense" and the so-called war on terror—to accept a stepped-up military presence in civilian life. And it is training for the military to develop its domestic command structures and capabilities to be used as needed against the future struggles of workers and farmers at home.

This course was begun by the Clinton administration, which set up what became the Northern Command, one of the nine "warfighting" command structures that make up the Pentagon's Unified Combat Command structure. It is the first time a U.S. armed forces command has been charged with carrying out military operations inside the country.

"Homeland defense" is part of the U.S. capitalist rulers' response to the growing world disorder of their system, which drives the bosses to brutally increase production speed, push down wages, disregard job safety, and trample on the dignity of working people. They are preparing for the future use of their military in anticipation of the working-class resistance they know these conditions will produce.

Without a steady inflow of immigrant workers, the U.S. bosses know they would face deep economic problems. They have no intention of getting rid of a pool of millions of workers with second-class status. The existing laws and current immigration "reform" bills are designed to perpetuate this setup through a combination of tightening the border, setting up a "guest worker" program, and legalizing the status of some of the 12 million undocumented workers.

The labor movement should call for an end to the immigration raids and oppose the border deployment of the National Guard. It should champion the call—heard resoundingly in the recent nationwide mass mobilizations—for immediate and unconditional residency for all undocumented immigrants.

LETTERS

Inflation in Zimbabwe

I would like to understand better why what appears to be depression conditions have seized Zimbabwe, what has been the role of the imperialist countries and what gains have been made by workers and farmers in Zimbabwe since the end of white minority rule?

Seth Dellinger
Washington, D.C.

Arabs in Sudan

In the lead article in the May 22 issue, "Sudan: U.S. gov't presses for military intervention," the seventh paragraph has a sentence that states "Arab-speaking militia groups." That should be "Arabic-speaking."

Background note: my sister tried to get me to go to the "Stop Genocide" rally mentioned in the article, and one of her motivations was an op-ed article by Nicholas Kristof, which throws in some anti-Arab racism to help get people to "do something." So the media, at least to a degree, are trying to make this an Arab vs. Black African issue. From my very little bit of reading, I understand that the racial, language, and religious mixtures are pretty confusing in reality. So I figured it was worth mentioning this "spelling-point," because *Militant* reporters will have to be careful about the "Arab" question in Sudan in general.

Dave Segal
New York

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.